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Volume 19

Number 4 *The Iowa Homemaker* vol.19, no.4

Article 12

1939

The Plight Before Christmas

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Recommended Citation

Ambrose, Shirley (1939) "The Plight Before Christmas," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 19 : No. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol19/iss4/12>

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The Plight

Before Christmas

*Shirley Ambrose outlines
a tour for the sensible shopper*

HOW familiar becomes the yearly reminder, Only 20 Shopping Days Until Christmas. There are signs in every store window and notices on every street corner advising "Do your Christmas shopping early!" But why all the excitement and rush and anxiety? Why not go about this business of shopping for gifts in a leisurely manner? This year let's enjoy it!

It may be a thrill to be a part of the bustling, brisk shoppers that throng the streets on the last days. But

it's no fun to elbow your way through these same mobs and crowd through revolving doors, crushing hats and dodging packages aimed at vulnerable ribs. You shouldn't need a string on your finger to remind you that the crowds are not so desperate early in the shopping season.

So many times the abused shopper pushes into a store only to find all the sales people busy. After waiting in line for 20 or 30 minutes, Miss Impatient Shopper may be tempted to complain to the nearest saleswoman. This is one of the first danger signals to watch. Count to 10 or whatever method you may use, but don't pick on the helpless employee.

When you finally attract the attention of a saleswoman, be ready for her. She will offer suggestions, but don't expect her to decide on gifts for Aunt Gertie and Cousin Ed as well as for the other 17 relatives. Prepare a tentative shopping list with a number of suggestions for each person.

Puzzling enough to some customers is the emphasis on neat shopping. They seem to think half the fun of selecting a necktie or men's socks is the rummaging of each article in sight. But it's no treat for the clerk who sighs with relief when the last customer goes out the door at closing time, and then must turn back to face a counter which will take at least 30 minutes to straighten.

With all purchases made, a discouraging pile of packages has accumulated, and getting into a bus becomes a puzzle even to a contortionist. Watch out for the little old lady and the girl across the aisle. They, too, want to get home in a hurry and without any mishaps.

Home again and the gifts must be wrapped and mailed. Some of the stores will do all your wrapping and mailing for you with a small charge, but in case you have not invested in this service, there are many pointers to remember. The postman, Santa's helper, is more than appreciative of a firmly wrapped, securely tied and plainly marked package.

This year do your Christmas shopping at home before you start tromping the streets. A perusal of recent issues of current magazines offers innumerable suggestions. Window shopping is a good preparation for the final selection. Ideas for gifts before you start out will cut the shopping season in half. And just keeping your ears open, as well as your eyes, will reveal many secrets, for brother and sister or Mother and Dad may let a hint slip toward a hoped-for gift.

Think how smart you'll feel when you drive down the busy streets the last days before Christmas with nothing to worry about but what those mad mobs of people are going to send you for a Christmas gift.

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